

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3 are pending in this application. Claim 2 has been canceled without prejudice.

Applicant hereby affirms election of Figs. 56 and 57 without traverse.

Claims 1-3 were rejected as being anticipated by Wensel et al (U.S. Patent No. 5, 895,398).

Discussion

Applicants submit that claim 1 is allowable over Wensel since Wensel does not disclose the step of “providing an obstruction removing element which is movable from a collapsed position to an expanded position, the obstruction removing element having a wire which has a distal end coupled to an insertion element, the wire also having a proximal end which is slidable on the insertion element, the obstruction removing element also having a stop coupled to the insertion element at a position proximal to the distal end of the insertion element, the proximal end of the wire contacting the stop when the obstruction removing element is in the expanded position, the stop preventing distal advancement of the proximal end of the wire to prevent expansion of the wire beyond the expanded position” (emphasis added)

Wensel discloses a wire having a proximal end which is slidable on an insertion element, however, Wensel does not disclose a stop positioned proximal to distal end of the insertion element. In the Office Action it is asserted that the distal end of the insertion element may be considered a stop which prevents distal advancement of the wire's proximal end. Applicants submit that the claimed stop, which is located proximal to the distal end of the insertion element, prevents over-expansion of the wire. This feature may be useful to prevent excessive distortion of the wire's intended shape when expanded. Over-expansion and distortion of the wire can occur when the wire is

manipulated to engage and dislodge the obstruction. Wensel may not prevent over-expansion and distortion of the wire and may permit the wire to become bunched-up or stacked near the tip of the insertion element when the insertion element is manipulated. Such distortion of the wire may reduce the ability of the device to remove the obstruction particularly if the wire is distorted beyond the intended shape when expanded.

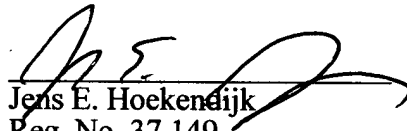
Applicants submit that dependent claim 3 is allowable since it depends from allowable independent claim 1.

CONCLUSION.

Applicants submit that all claims are allowable and an action to that end is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 415-412-3322.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date


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